

Serial No. 09/726,710

May 10, 2004

Reply to the Office Action dated March 24, 2004

Page 4 of 5

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2-5 and 7 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, Applicant AMENDS claims 2-5 and 7 and CANCELS claims 1 and 6.

Applicant greatly appreciates the Examiner's indication that claim 7 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicant has amended claim 7 to be in independent form including all of the features of base claim 6.

Claims 1, 2, 4, and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernard et al. (U.S. 4,236,125) in view of Okada et al. (EP 0 903 801). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bernard et al. in view of Okada et al., and further in view of Maeda et al. (U.S. 3,836,874). And claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maeda et al. in view of Okada et al., and further in view of Konishi et al. (EP 0 903 802).

As noted above, Applicant has canceled claims 1 and 6, amended allowable claim 7 to be in independent form including all of the features of base claim 6, and amended claims 2-5 to be dependent upon claim 7. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the prior art rejections of claims 1-6 are moot. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the prior art rejections of claims 1-7.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that claims 2-5 and 7 are allowable.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully submits that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are solicited.

Serial No. 09/726,710

May 10, 2004

Reply to the Office Action dated March 24, 2004

Page 5 of 5

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1353.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: May 10, 2004



Attorneys for Applicant

Joseph R. Keating
Registration No. 37,368

Christopher A. Bennett
Registration No. 46,710

KEATING & BENNETT LLP
10400 Eaton Place, Suite 312
Fairfax, VA 22030
Telephone: (703) 385-5200
Facsimile: (703) 385-5080